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Legislators applaud prayer breakfast

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

Many windows in the Baptist Building of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) overlook the State Capitol building in downtown Jackson. It is a special event when these "across the street neighbors" join each other in fellowship.

For the third year, state legislators were invited to a Legislative Prayer Breakfast hosted by the Christian Action Commission (CAC) of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

According to many legislators who have attended over the years, it is a highlight of their annual session. This year, the legislators attending were no less appreciative.

Jimmy Carter at Camp David, the presidential retreat in the mountains of Maryland.

Following the music, Bill Hardin, pastor of First Church, Picayune, and first vice-president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, shared a devotional. Using selected verses from John 21, Hardin drew parallels with Jesus serving breakfast by the sea to His disciples after His resurrection, as an example of the service to others that all could offer.

Porter closed the gathering with comments and prayer.

According to Porter, "The attendees were, to a person, thankful for the invitation." Several legislators stated that this was an event they never missed, and how much they appreciated that there was no political agenda or pressure involved, Porter said.

Mississippi Lt. Governor Amy Tuck said, "I look forward to this breakfast every year. I wouldn't miss it for anything."

The CAC has the responsibility of keeping up with what is presented in the Legislature, to monitor bills, and to keep Mississippi Baptists informed of how proposed laws might affect them.

The CAC is charged with being the moral, ethical, social, and legal entity of the Mississippi Baptist Convention in



WARM WELCOME — Mississippi Lt. Governor Amy Tuck (left) is greeted by Bill Hardin, pastor of First Church, Picayune, and first vice-president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, at the 2003 Legislative Prayer Breakfast January 9 in the Skyroom of the Baptist Building in Jackson. Hardin was the keynote speaker for the annual event. (BR photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

relation to legislation being proposed. In a state with a population of 2.84 million people, the voice of 712,000 Mississippi Baptists can be said to be of some significance to legislators.

The ministries of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission are supported by gifts from the state's churches to the Mississippi Cooperative Program.

For more information on legislative matters and other CAC programs, contact Porter at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3332 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 332. E-mail: jporter@mbcb.org.



ON CUE — Jim Worthington (right), concert artist from Grenada, enlists Mississippi Senator Richard White of Terry to assist him by blowing a simulated train whistle during Worthington's musical presentation at the January 9 Legislative Prayer Breakfast in the Skyroom of the Baptist Building in Jackson. White, a member of Wynndale Church, Terry, is a former trustee of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission. (BR photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

As one state senator said, "This is such a great send-off for the beginning of the session. It sets the tone for the days ahead."

According to Jimmy Porter, executive director-treasurer of the CAC, "We provide the prayer breakfast to encourage the legislators, to assure them they're in the prayers of Mississippi Baptists, and to let them know we care about them and their families while they're here."

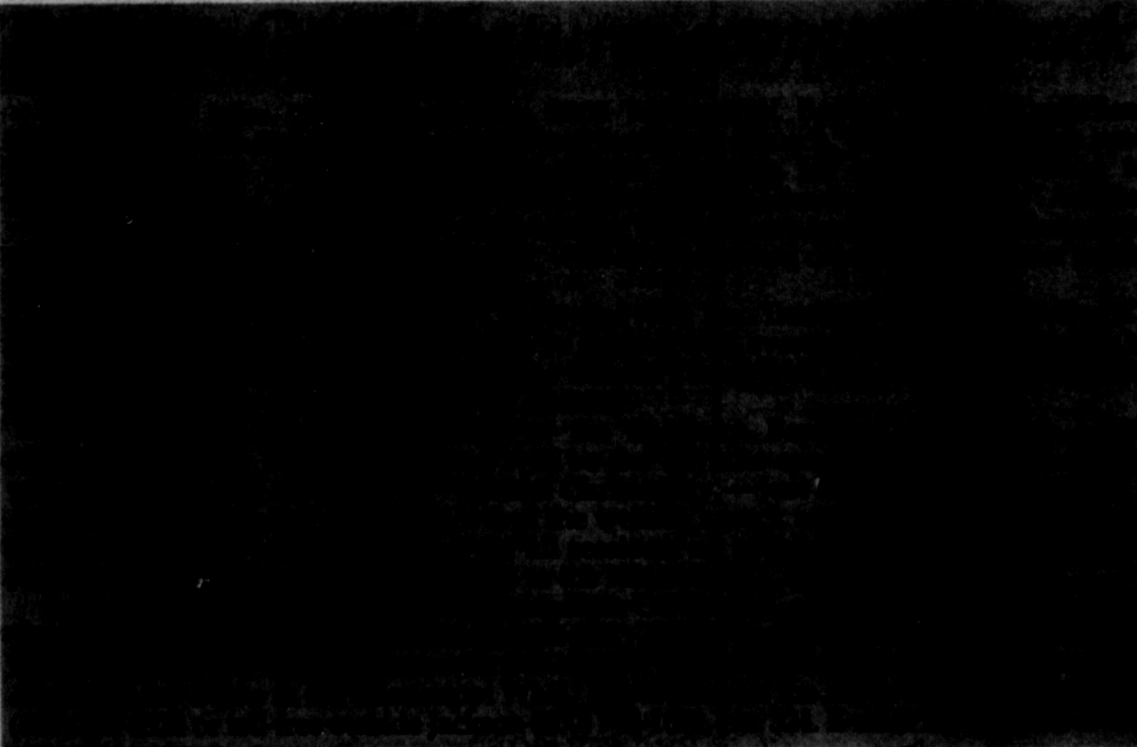
"We just want to thank them for being our public servants," Porter stated.

The breakfast, held January 9, in the Skyroom of the Baptist Building, attracted legislators from across the state who are in Jackson for the annual three-month session.

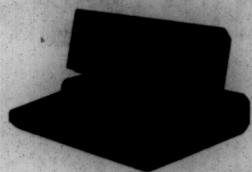
A full breakfast was served at 7:45 a.m. Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the MBCB, welcomed legislators to the Baptist Building and opened the event with prayer.

Jim Worthington, concert artist from Grenada, led in music, even getting the early morning group on their feet and singing God Bless America.

Worthington was formerly a member of the Cumberland Boys, the gospel group of the Grand Ole Opry. Worthington, among other honors, has performed for President



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Send in the firing squad

By now, everyone in the Western World has surely heard of the plight of Mississippi's U.S. Senator Trent Lott, former and was-soon-to-be-again Majority Leader for Republicans in the U.S. Senate. By now, everyone knows that Lott opened his mouth and placed his foot squarely inside when he used what he freely admits were inappropriate, racially-insensitive words in an effort to praise U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina on the occasion of his 100th birthday.

By now, everyone knows that Lott's remarks led to his December 20 resignation as Majority Leader. He has said he will continue to represent Mississippi in the U.S. Senate whether or not he has a leadership post.

The highest-ranking Southern Baptist in federal elective office has paid a high price for the Thurmond remarks that many groups and individuals perceived as segregationist at best and racist at worse. Lott's smorgasbord of *mea culpas*, apologies, and promises to mend his ways, delivered by a variety of means over a number of weeks, failed to assuage his detractors and even alienated some of his supporters.

Lott has taken his lumps, some of which were inarguably deserved and some of which were as equally and inarguably undeserved. He has accepted his fate with humility. "I'm a big boy," he told an Associated Press reporter after his resignation from the Majority Leader post.

Many people inside and outside Mississippi are celebrating his ouster. Many others are sorry to see him go and disturbed by the ill-treatment he received at the hands of his enemies during the ordeal. Still others are indifferent.

Then there are some people who just like to pile on. Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville, is one of those people.

While Lott was being attacked on all sides for his admittedly scandalous remarks, Land felt it necessary to inject himself and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) into the overheated secular politics of the moment. During the December 14 broadcast of Land's Cooperative Program-supported national radio show entitled *Richard Land Live!*, he joined the growing chorus calling for Lott's resignation.

According to Baptist Press, Land spent the entire three hours of the radio show lambasting Lott for having "an enormous and glaring blind spot in his personal understanding of just how wrong and evil segregation was and how horrific the privations were that were visited upon African-Americans during that period."

Land did not elaborate on the process he used to arrive at that conclusion — such as a personal telephone conversation with Lott, for example — but he does go on to say, "Such a lack of comprehension disqualifies one from national leadership, in my opinion, in the 21st century."

Regardless of one's opinion of Lott, Land's remarks about him were unseemly and — most notably — delivered from a safe distance after the protests grew and it was obvious Lott would have to resign. (Lott made the Thurmond remarks on December 5; Land waited a full nine days to issue his call for Lott to resign.)

"THE LAW IS GREAT,
BUT WAIT TIL YOU
SEE WHAT ELSE
HE IS PLANNING
FOR YOU!"



The question is, why did Land feel the need to involve the SBC and the ERLC in this thoroughly secular, political dogfight in such a Johnny-come-lately fashion?

Frank Pollard, retired pastor of First Church, Jackson, once said in a sermon it seems to him that when a fellow believer makes a mistake and gets into trouble, Baptists are quick to send in the firing squad instead of an ambulance.

At least we know now that Richard Land likes to keep his gunpowder dry.

GUEST OPINION:

Births reinforce sanctity of life

By Edna Earle Crews, member
First Church, Crystal Springs



What a joy to have two new grandbabies born during the week of Christmas! Last month just as we celebrated the birth of Jesus, our family also praised God for the births of our fourth granddaughter and first grandson.

Scriptures and songs celebrating the birth of God's Son rang through our hearts and souls as we watched our newborns through the nursery window at Woman's Hospital in Jackson. What a precious gift God had given us during the season of His Son's birth. Their births have made Southern Baptists' observance of Sanctity of Human Life Sunday on January 19 take on new importance for me.

At the hospital, I watched the nurses hold the babies' tiny arms and legs as they measured them, gave them shots, and applied salve to their eyes. I wondered how anyone could condone abortion. How could anyone deny living souls their right to life? How could elected officials fail to oppose something as brutal as abortion, especially partial birth abortion? How could a doctor or nurse, whose purpose is to save lives, be a part of these procedures that amount to euphemisms for murder?

When I hold these small babies, I am amazed at the miracle of God's designs that he formed in the womb. Unlike the 3566 babies who were aborted in Mississippi in 2001 or the 43 million-plus babies who have been aborted nationwide since the Supreme Court decided in 1973 to legalize abortion, our new grandbabies received the gift of life and with it the chance to dream, laugh, learn, and praise God.

America lost approximately 894,478 people in all the wars from the American Revolution through the Gulf War, and we have lost over 43 million in the 30 years since *Roe v. Wade*, the lawsuit that legalized abortion.

Where is the outrage over the deaths of these 43 million-plus babies?

We can remember the outrage over the 2000-plus who died on

Sept. 11, 2001, and the continuing outrage over the killing of millions of the Jews during World War II. I find it puzzling that few cry out over abortions in the U.S. and in other countries around the world.

Poet W. B. Yeats reminds us, "The best lack all conviction/while the worse are full of passionate intensity."

Unborn children are not the only victims of the apathy toward the sanctity of life. In 1984, Richard D. Lamm, then Colorado governor, said in an address to the Colorado Health Lawyers Association: "Elderly people who are terminally ill have a duty to die and get out of the way" (The New York Times, March 29, 1984, sec. A).

Surely this statement does not reflect any regard for a sanctity-of-life perspective and serves as an example of how

society's perception of an individual's "right to die" can quickly deteriorate into a humanistic "duty to die."

In an article entitled, *The Sanctity of Life Ethic*, Allen Turner says that "Americans have been sliding down a slippery slope and have arrived at a point where they can advocate the death of other human beings (via abortion, infanticide, and now euthanasia) for their own convenience."

As Christians we recognize that life is God-given, and we do not have the right to take it. Pleading "difficult situations" does not justify abortions, infanticide, or euthanasia.

Sin is sin and all of our rationalizations will not change this. The court rulings making the actions "legal" will not change God's view: "There is a way which seems right to man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov. 14:12).

We need to have conviction and to be full of "passionate intensity" to convince those who do not believe in the sanctity of life to change their position.

Crews is a trustee of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission.

Doctor: tragedy opened door for God's love

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Judy Williams was working in the surgical area at the Jibla Baptist Hospital in Yemen when she heard that there had been gunshots.

Fellow physician Martha Myers was dead. Hospital administrator Bill Koehn was dying. Efforts to resuscitate purchasing agent Kathy Gariety failed. Pharmacist Don Caswell needed surgery for bullet wounds in his abdomen.

Williams, a surgeon who has worked at the hospital in Yemen since 1999, recounted what happened Dec. 30 in her typical matter-of-fact manner.

"I was in doctor mode," Williams said. "I didn't think, 'This is my friend, my boss.'"

There were a few moments when the enormity of it all broke through: "Bill's dead. Kathy's dead. Martha's dead. Don's been shot."

Now, as she attends the medical needs of Caswell, who is rapidly recovering at an undisclosed location, Williams is starting to grieve.

"I'm sad. I cry sometimes but then I remember pleasant experiences we had and get a little smile on my face," she said.

Yemenis grieve

Yemeni locals who worked alongside International Mission Board workers at the hospital counted the victims as their friends too, Williams said.

"They're grieving just as much as we are," she said, "and they are also asking the question 'why.'"

Though Williams doesn't venture to guess why her coworkers died, she can tell her Yemeni friends that she knows her colleagues are in heaven because they had a relationship with God through Jesus.

"We know that God has our best interests at heart, even when we can't see that," she said. "We know that he loves us, even when the evidence we see doesn't suggest that, and to be able to share that, especially with a Muslim people who have a very, very different vision of who God is and what he's like, has been very positive."

Open doors

Though Williams has been absorbed with caring for Caswell since the shooting, she experienced a few poignant moments with Yemeni coworkers after the initial commotion settled down.

One man, who was a close friend of Gariety, kept saying, "I'm so, so sorry; I'm so, so sad."

All Williams could tell him was, "I understand."

"Sharing that emotion with him — for him to be sharing that with a female — was very different," Williams said. "It was something I don't think would have happened in most places in Yemen."

Williams would never choose to repeat the experiences, but she acknowledges that her colleagues' deaths have opened doors for sharing God's love.

"It's been great," she said. "It's hurt, yes, but it's opened up so many doors for sharing that weren't there before."

Ready to return

When Williams left Jibla with the Caswell family, she wasn't sure she would ever return, realizing that various regulations might prevent international workers from returning to the hospital.

"My plan is to stay here as long as Don needs me and as long as I need to be away from Jibla, which now would be any time when Don doesn't need medical care so often and when someone in his family can change his dressings," she said.

If she's allowed to work at the Jibla hospital, she will.



Koehn



Myers



Gariety



Caswell



SITE OF TRAGEDY — The Jibla Baptist Hospital, situated in the mountains of southwest Yemen, was the site where a lone gunman killed three Southern Baptist workers and wounded a fourth worker on Dec. 30. (BP photo)



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FRONT PAGE

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"Jibla still needs medical care. That's still a wonderful avenue to be able to share," she said.

For this straightforward surgeon, the decision is simple. She will return to Jibla because God wants her to be there.

"I know a lot of people can't understand that but that's ... where he's saying 'go' right now."

■ More on the Yemen shootings: imb.org/urgent.

■ Memorial gifts honor slain workers: resources.imb.org/index.cfm/fa/prod/ProdID/871.htm.

■ Hear audio clip of Williams discussing the recuperation of wounded hospital pharmacist Don Caswell: real.imb.org/AudioNews/caswell.mp3.

Looking back

10 years ago

Billy Graham's daughter, Anne Graham Lotz, is cancelled from Oklahoma Baptist's annual evangelism conference after at least one pastor complains that a woman should not be in a potential preaching situation.

20 years ago

The body of a Noxubee County pastor's son is found in Pensacola near the seafood company where he was last seen seven months earlier. Jerry Zgarba, pastor of Brooksville Church, said his son had only worked one day at the seafood company before he disappeared.

50 years ago

Southern Baptists set as an objective for 1954 a net gain of one million members enrolled in Sunday School. Under the slogan, "A Million More in '54," Sunday school secretaries from 22 states gathered in Nashville to work out the problems in the gigantic undertaking.

LifeWatchers

NAME	AGE	DATE OF BIRTH	DATE OF DEATH	CAUSE OF DEATH
1. Bill Koehn	58	1945	Dec. 30, 2002	Gunshot wound
2. Martha Myers	45	1957	Dec. 30, 2002	Gunshot wound
3. Kathy Gariety	42	1960	Dec. 30, 2002	Gunshot wound
4. Don Caswell	48	1954	Dec. 30, 2002	Gunshot wound
5. Judy Williams	45	1957	Dec. 30, 2002	Gunshot wound
6. Bill Koehn	58	1945	Dec. 30, 2002	Gunshot wound
7. Martha Myers	45	1957	Dec. 30, 2002	Gunshot wound
8. Kathy Gariety	42	1960	Dec. 30, 2002	Gunshot wound
9. Don Caswell	48	1954	Dec. 30, 2002	Gunshot wound
10. Judy Williams	45	1957	Dec. 30, 2002	Gunshot wound

Myers described as 'victorious Christian'

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP) — More than 1,200 people celebrated the life of physician Martha Myers, an Alabama Baptist who devoted her career to Southern Baptist medical work in Yemen, during a Jan. 4 memorial service at Dalraida Church in Montgomery.

Throughout the celebration, Myers' selfless ways and servant mindset surfaced again and again.

"Martha was a victorious Christian and was obedient until death," said Rick Evans, pastor of Dalraida, Myers' home church.

Speaking to a capacity crowd, Evans said, "She had no life of her own, it was of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Likening Myers' faith and service to that of the Bible's descriptions of the apostle

Paul and the deacon Stephen, Evans quoted Philippians 1:21 which states, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," and 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

"All three stayed on God's course," Evans said. "[Staying on course in God's will] is not easy because it is a life of self-denial, but they never denied his will."

"What a misguided, deprived heart meant for evil, God has meant for good," Evans said.

Myers, a 57-year-old obstetrician and gynecologist, served as a Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB) medical worker in Yemen for 24 years. She was murdered Dec. 30 when a lone gunman attacked the Baptist hospital in Jibla, Yemen. Also killed were two other IMB workers — hospital administrator William Koehn and purchasing manager Kathleen Gariety. A fourth worker, pharmacist Don Caswell, was wounded.

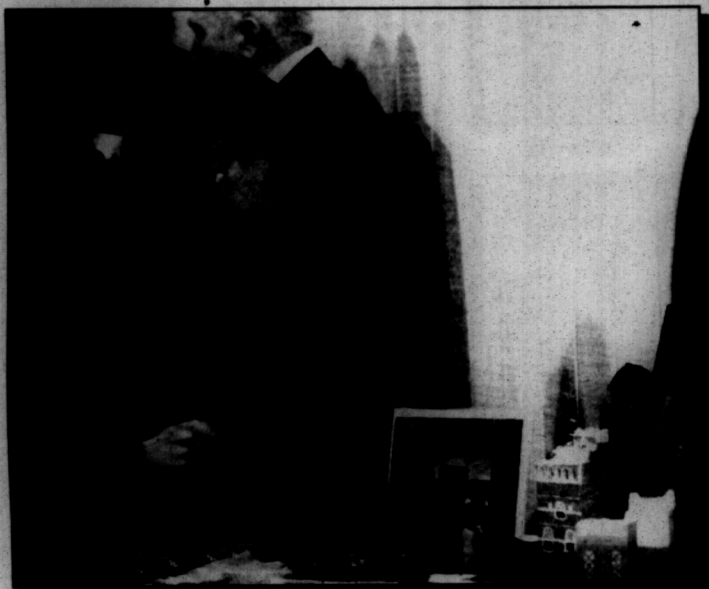
"[Martha] was always obedient to the call of God," Evans said, "even as a GA [Girls in Action member] and as a medical student."

Evans read a poem written by a schoolmate of Myers. Playing off the words from the song "We've a Story to Tell the Nations," the friend wrote, "We sang, she went. We sang, she told."

"Because of her ministry and her obedience, there was a difference made," Evans said.

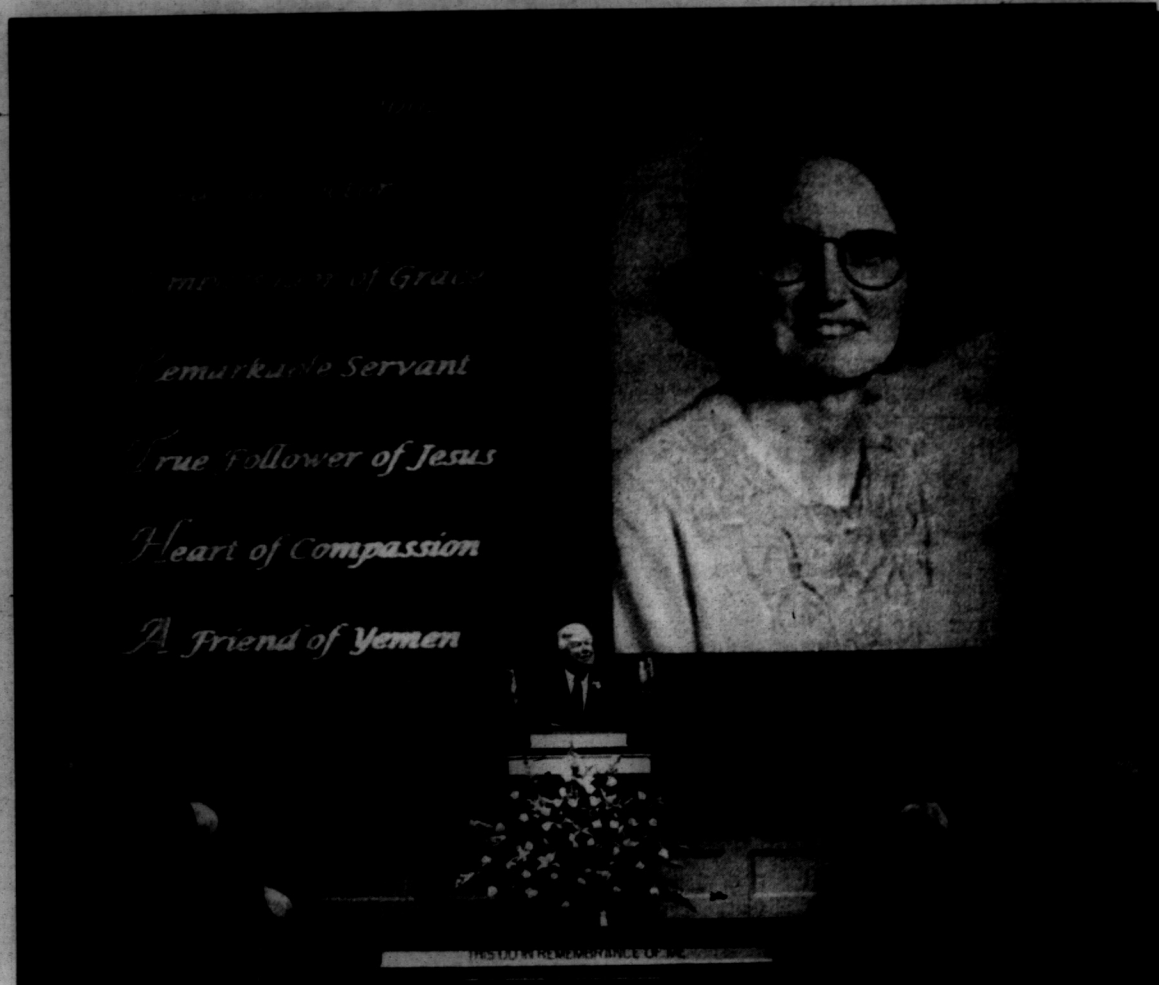
Jerry Rankin, president of the International Mission Board, told friends and family members at the memorial service that he witnessed Myers' call to God and selfless service during his visits to Yemen.

"Only those who saw her take a sick Arab child in her arms could understand what a servant is," Rankin said. "Each day she lived there, ...she died to self."



LIFETIME OF SERVICE — Pamela Lockett of Montgomery, Ala., looks at a table filled with souvenirs from Yemen and pictures of Martha Myers' lifetime of service, following a Jan. 4 memorial service at Dalraida Church, Montgomery, Myers' home church. (BP photo by Erin Webster, courtesy of The Alabama Baptist)

OFFICIAL CONDOLENCES — Dorothy Myers (left) mother of Martha Myers, receives condolences from Mayor Bobby Bright of Montgomery, Ala. (right) and his wife Lynn during a receiving line following the Jan. 4 memorial service for Martha Myers at Dalraida Church in Montgomery. (BP photo by Erin Webster, courtesy of The Alabama Baptist)



MYERS REMEMBERED — Rick Evans, pastor of Dalraida Church in Montgomery, Ala., speaks about Martha Myers' victorious Christian life at a Jan. 4 memorial service for Myers, one of three International Mission Board workers slain Dec. 30 at the Baptist hospital in Jibla, Yemen. (BP photo by Erin Webster, courtesy of The Alabama Baptist)

"Martha's colleagues said the gunmen did not take her life," Rankin noted. "She lost her life to Jesus Christ years ago when she trusted him."

"Martha was not living for herself ... but to serve others. Her life exemplified Jesus Christ," he said.

Rankin also pointed out that living by faith is "not just hope of personal salvation but also the hope that everything one lives for will one day be fulfilled. Could it be the gain [of death] will one day be the salvation of the people of Yemen?"

As many played tribute to Myers' life as a servant and follower of Jesus Christ, others also attested to her true friendship — of people at home in Alabama and especially of the Yemeni people.

Pat Harris, a close friend of Myers, shared at the memorial service how she got to know Myers in 2001. Myers was home for the year due to technical problems preventing her from returning to Yemen.

Myers wished every second she were back in Yemen, but Harris said Myers still allowed God to use her that year in Montgomery.

"I already had a walk with the Lord, but Martha... in her gentle and soft ways... showed me that I was not a selfless servant," Harris said.

"She was a wonderful mentor," Harris said. "She was so close to the Lord that she didn't realize how much wisdom she had."

"She had a divine appointment with me," Harris said. "I praise the Lord for the opportunity to have her as part of my life."

During a Jan. 2 memorial service at Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, church member Lynette Granade said, "She was our Baptist version of Mother Teresa — that says it

all."

Granade and her husband Jack developed a relationship with Myers when she came to Mobile to do her medical residency at the University of South Alabama School of Medicine in the 1970s, when she joined Dauphin Way and met the Granades.

"Over the years we stayed close friends, and our children just loved her too," Lynette Granade said, noting that Myers had stayed with them numerous times throughout the years when she was on stateside assignment from Yemen.

Myers was a 1967 graduate of Samford University, majoring in biology. She earned the doctor of medicine degree from the Medical College of Alabama at the University of Alabama in Birmingham in 1971.



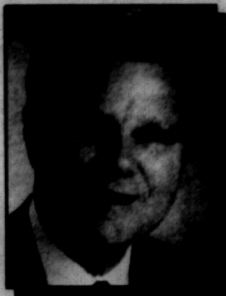
RECEIVING WELL-WISHERS — Ira Myers (right) father of Martha Myers, greets well-wishers during a receiving line following a Jan. 4 memorial service for his daughter at Dalraida Church, Montgomery, Ala., the family's home church. (BP photo by Erin Webster, courtesy of The Alabama Baptist)

IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?

One of the millions of moving stories that came out of the September 11, 2001, tragedy involved a couple who went to work that morning and never saw each other again. The husband worked at the World Trade Center and his wife was a nurse at the nearby St. Vincent's Hospital. As that beautiful September day unfolded and the horror hit, the couple, like so many others, began trying to make contact with family and friends. The wife stood at the window of the hospital and talked with her husband who was working on one of the lower floors in the twin towers. Both planes had struck and fire and smoke billowed out over the city. The husband, who could not see exactly what was taking place, was getting a commentary from his wife who was watching the fire as it raged far above the floor where her husband was at work. She told him, several times, that she thought everything was all right. A moment or two later she heard a rumbling, looked back out the window and watched as the building in which her husband was at work collapsed.

The woman had thought everything was all right since she was able to talk to her husband, the fire was not on his floor, and everything seemed to be sturdy and stable where he was. Of course, it was not. At times, we in the church look through our small window pane at the world and think everything is all right. We may look up and down our street, around our neighborhood, or even in our town and city, and think things aren't too bad. Although I don't want to be negative, I think it is important for us to recognize that there are fires burning on the floors above us that are critical.

Let me mention a few of



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

those fires for your consideration and attention:

■ **Lostness.** According to the Scriptures, any person who does not know Jesus Christ as Savior is lost. Christianity is not in a religious contest with other world religious systems, but we are committed to sharing God's love that is poured out to us in His only begotten Son, Jesus. Every year 80-82 million new souls come to live with us here on planet earth, and every one of them will need to know a Savior to save them from their sins. We, who know the Lord, are the only people on earth called to get the word out that Jesus can save people from their sins.

Some time back a man asked me if I thought that everyone was going to be saved. The answer is, "No!" The Bible is clear that everyone is not going to be saved. It is also clear that everyone needs to be saved and we need to come to the realization that people will not be saved if we do not tell them about our wonderful Lord.

■ **Littlefness.** Maybe this refers more to a look inside of us and inside of our churches than anything else. When Jesus saves us He saves us to serve Him and to bless others. He does not save us so that we can simply wallow in the comfort of our own spiritual-security. Our Christian vision should be a Kingdom view, a world outlook, that extends to the ends of the earth. The marvelous channel that God has given to us as Southern Baptists is the Cooperative Program. It literally finds its way into lands, needs, cracks,

and crevices of lives far beyond anything you and I could ever accomplish alone or as an individual church.

Littlefness isn't usually referred to as a sin, but in this case it is. I have known of churches that turned inward, all the while thinking they were turning outward, as they did their own thing and ignored involvement with other churches or the denomination. The question may be asked, "What good does it do me or my church to give through the Cooperative Program?" I believe that is a valid question that needs answering. The Cooperative Program allows you to participate not only in statewide Kingdom activities but nation and worldwide mission ventures that you certainly could not do alone.

The other question that ought to be asked is, "How does it help others?" This is probably the more valid question and certainly the most rewarding answers can be given. Big churches can be a big blessing and even small churches can light the way for so many others, but no one can be all that God wants them to be with a small, ungrateful heart. As in the story of The Grinch That Stole Christmas, his problem could be ours. He had a heart two times too small.

■ **Laziness.** This is another fire that burns around us at times. Theologically, I would define laziness as the sin of doing nothing. Oh, we have good intentions and we even have good thoughts. We may

even be creative, innovative, and stimulative, yet remain unmoved to get up and do something that will make a difference. I am fairly confident that the easiest sin to commit and the most justifiable sin we commit is the sin of laziness. Most of the time no one knows anything about it, although it may have dire consequences. When someone does discover our unresponsive streak, we quickly rationalize and explain why we didn't, or couldn't, or wouldn't. We can turn almost any direction and find an explanation. We can point to others and certainly they will hinder us from doing God's work. We can explain that we were not responsible, but deep down inside we face the real culprit — laziness!

This fire will burn into every aspect of your relationship with the Lord. It will keep you from going to church. It will stop you from taking a job in the Lord's work. It will even, at times, affect your attitude and overall it will stunt your growth.

■ **Luciferness.** This is the last, but certainly not the least, of the fires that burn. You know who Lucifer is — Satan himself. Lucifer is the committed archenemy of God and whatever the Lord wants to do. "Luciferness" is whatever he can do to stop the advance of God's Kingdom and whoever he can use to bring about that barricade. Do not think for a moment that Satan is not alive and well, hurting, harming, influencing, and infecting. Indeed, as the Scripture says, "...like a roaring lion he roams about." We cannot and must not ignore his presence or his persistence in seeking to hurt what God favors.

Is everything all right? Not quite, but you can be assured of this — the Lord God Almighty is alive and well and wants to work through us.

B&H announces first book releases of new year

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Ten books, including one from native Mississippian and motivational speaker Zig Ziglar, are being released this month by Broadman & Holman Publishers (B&H), the trade publishing division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Non-fiction

■ **Zig Ziglar's Life Lifters** by Zig Ziglar, who shares encouragement and hope on several topics including attitude, love, inspiration, relationships, goal-setting, and motivation. This is Ziglar's 18th book on topics celebrating personal growth, leadership, success, faith and family.

■ **Am I the One?**, a new TruthQuest youth product written by James R. Lucas and edited by Steve Keels, examines dating and marriage by asking the reader to discover who he or she should become before marriage. Lucas is executive director of the Relationship Development Center in Shawnee Mission, Kan.

■ **The Young Man in the Mirror**, by Patrick Morley, who instructs high school teens on how to live as Christians. Topics include

how to get along in families, how to treat women, handling sexual temptation, and discovering God's will for one's life. Morley is the author of the best-selling *The Man in the Mirror*.

■ **At the Feet of Jesus**, by Brian Shipman. This book includes stories of biblical characters who turn to Jesus when their lives are at rope's end. Each of these characters receives hope from sitting at the feet of Jesus.

■ **Know Fear**, by Ed Young Jr., senior pastor of Fellowship Church in Grapevine, Texas. Young offers a clear, biblical perspective on the complex emotion of fear.

■ **Pursuing God's Own Heart**, by Jerry Vines, pastor of First Church in Jacksonville, Fla. The book is an account on the life of King David and how God can use Christians in incredible ways.

Fiction

■ **The Gathering Storm**, by Frank Simon, is about Barbara Post, a federal alcohol, tobacco and firearms agent from Texas who is assigned to investigate a militia movement brewing near the Great Lakes. She discovers the group is not made up of

local dissidents, but former military members planning to assassinate the president.

Bible products

■ **The Gift: A New Testament for New Believers**, is the latest edition of the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) for new believers. A 90-day devotional helps new Christians learn about the rewards and responsibilities of living in faith.

■ **Holman QuickSource Guide: Atlas of Bible Lands**, is a reference guide with geographical information about biblical events. Included are maps of the journeys of Abraham, the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, Joshua's conquest of Canaan, Jesus' birth and childhood, a day-by-day account of passion week in Jerusalem, and the journeys of Paul.

■ **Joshua**, by Kenneth O. Gangel and Max Anders, is a new book in the Holman Old Testament Commentary series that explains and interprets the biblical texts of Joshua. Each chapter includes quotes, illustrations, Bible exposition, principles contained in each passage, applications of that passage, a teaching plan, and discussion starters.

Breeden to resign from GMA post

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Gospel Music Association (GMA) President Frank Breeden has resigned as president of the GMA and the Christian Music Trade Association (CMTA). He will remain on staff until Jan. 31 and will serve as a consultant for GMA through April 30.

Breeden chose not to renew his contract and will be pursuing different business opportunities, according to a GMA spokesperson. He was not asked to resign, the spokesperson said.

GMA Board Chairman John W. Stoll will assume the duties of interim president of both organizations on Feb. 1 but will begin working with Breeden immediately on transition issues.

Breeden became president of the GMA and CMTA in 1997, after serving on the GMA board of directors since 1988. While Breeden was president, he and CMTA made significant advances including the acquisition of Seminar in the Rockies at Estes Park; the addition of the Dove Awards to the National Association of Recording Merchandisers (NARM) official merchandising campaigns for general market retailers; and the launch of the GMA's Internet presence with gospel-music.org, doveawards.com, and cmta.com.

Breeden served as executive producer for GMA's television specials, including the Dove Awards' first live network telecast.

He also worked with the White House in producing the television special, "White House Salute to Gospel Music." Breeden was instrumental in legislative issues, including the recent resolution of differences between the Recording Industry Association of America and the National Religious Broadcasters over a webcasting bill in Congress.

ERLC pushes for cloning ban in U.S.

WASHINGTON (BP) — The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) has asked the leaders of both houses of Congress to make a complete ban on human cloning a priority in the new session.

In a Jan. 7 letter, ERLC President Richard Land asked new Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist and Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert to introduce comprehensive bans on cloning as bills S. 1 and H.R. 1, respectively. Land's request came on the first day of the 108th Congress.

Citing the recent announcement by Clonaid of the birth of a clone, Land told the leaders, "Even if this particular story is a hoax, the next one might not be. It is critical that Congress move immediately to enact a complete ban on all human cloning. We will work tirelessly to see that the bill is passed and signed into law" by President Bush.

The late December announcement that a clone had been born has intensified calls for Congress to act. While there is widespread skepticism that Clonaid, which is affiliated with the Raelian religious sect, has produced a successful clone, other organizations are working toward the same goal.

NAMES IN THE NEWS & JUST FOR THE RECORD



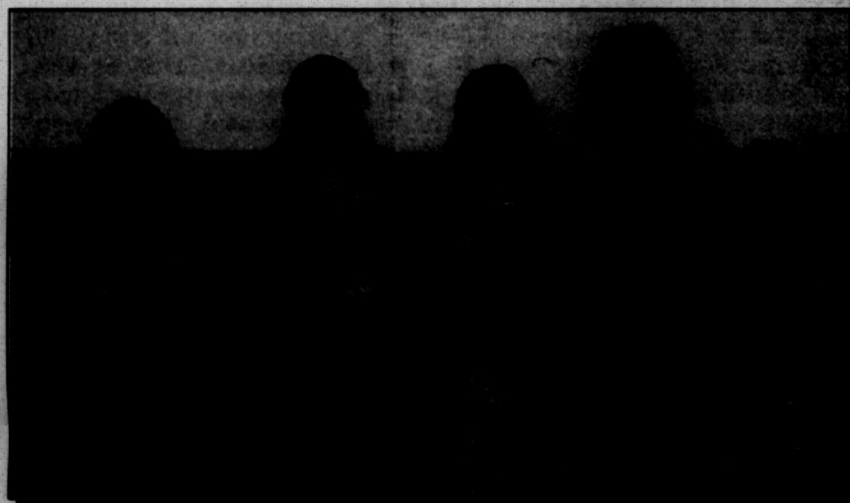
Deacons of Castlewoods Church, Brandon



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

Castlewoods Church, Brandon, recently completed a deacon reorganization. All members of the new deacon body pledged a commitment of walking in the Law of Love and acknowledged that they are their brother's keepers.

Griffith Memorial Church, Jackson, ordained Rick Bewley to the ministry on Dec. 15.



GAs of First Church, Ocean Springs



Bob Jones, Lee Roberts, and Joe Cladwell, pastor

Pictured (from left) are Philip Cooper, pastor, Bewley, and his wife Sharon.

for the Jackson County Seaman's Center in December. Pictured (from left, front) are Erika Coleman, Kaitlyn Parker, Jordan Panter, (back) Katie McMurty, Brie Yoe, Natalie Barnett, and Devon Matney. Gloria Turner and Beverly Yoe are the GA leaders. Michael Barnett is pastor.

Cedar View Church, Olive Branch, ordained Lee

East McComb Church, McComb, will hold a women's luncheon, Women in Gods Service (WINGS), Jan. 17 from 12-1 p.m. at the Days Inn. Gloria Thurman, a missionary from Bangladesh, will be speaking. For more information and reservations call (601) 684-1851.

Roberts as deacon on Dec. 15. Pictured (from left) are Bob Jones, Roberts, and Joe S. Caldwell, pastor.

The GAs of First Church, Ocean Springs, made gift bags



Philip Cooper, pastor, and Rick & Sharon Bewley

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NAMES IN THE NEWS — JUST FOR THE RECORD

West McComb Church, McComb, exceeded their goals on both the State Mission Offering and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The State Mission Offering totaled \$1,837.11 and the Lottie Moon Offering totaled \$8,072.08.

Indian Springs Church, Laurel, recently held an International Missions Banquet. Vic and Sharon Johnson, missionaries serving in Brazil, were the speakers. The RAs led in pledges. The GAs shared a song and posters. Mike West is pastor.

The RAs of **Indian Springs Church, Laurel,** presented \$214.86 to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The RAs had set a goal of \$200. RA leaders are Morris Welch, Issiah Miles, and Carroll Smith.

The GAs of **Salem Church, Raymond,** will be hosting a Ladies Tea Party on Jan. 18 at 2 p.m. in the Christian Life Center. Becky Brown will provide entertainment. The proceeds will go towards the purchase of a goat for Heifer International. For ticket information, call (601) 885-9668. Pictured (from left, front) are Brooke Gunn, Carlee Roberts, Ashley Smith, Calyn Bird, Jessica McGuffee, (back) Emily Henderson, Heather Gray, Shelby Peeler, and Rebecca Pierce.

Lee Crawford, Minister of Music at Ingram Church, Baldwin, has retired after many years of service. A reception will honor him on Jan. 19 from 2-4 p.m. All are welcome.

Jayess Church, Jayess, will host a Bible Study, The Doctrines of Grace, Jan. 31 to Feb. 2. Terrell Suggs, Associational Director of Missions, Durant, Okla., will be speaking. Sessions will be Jan. 31 at 7 p.m., Feb. 1 at 10:30 a.m., and 7 p.m. It will conclude on Feb. 2 with Sunday School at 9:30 a.m. and worship at 11 a.m. For more information, call (601) 833-7159, (601) 833-6143, or (601) 694-2994.

First Church, McLain, will hold dedication services for their new fellowship hall on Jan. 19. Regular morning worship will be held and lunch will be served at 12:30 p.m. The dedication ceremony will begin at 1:30 p.m. Marvin Thompson will be the guest speaker. All are welcome. Michael Street is pastor.



Trinity Church, Meridian

Wendell Gavin will be speaking. Childcare and dinner will be provided. On Jan. 19, Jerry Hood, former pastor, will bring the morning message and his son, Darren Hood, will lead music. Grady B. Parker, former pastor, will bring the evening message and Greg Smith will lead music. A fellowship will follow this service. Donald Pounders is pastor. For more information, call (601) 729-2230 or (601) 729-3408.

Parkway Church, Houston, recently completed a Fantastic Fall Sunday School enrollment/enlargement campaign. They recorded 121 first-time visitors and enrolled 44 new people. Gregg Thomas is pastor.

Trinity Church, Meridian, merged with Hickory Grove Church this year. Trinity has since paved their parking lot and they held a note burning in October. The congregation celebrated with a gospel singing and cookout.

Pleasant Home Church, Laurel, will hold an adult dinner, Alley Cat Inn, as part of their Centennial Celebration on Jan. 18 at 6:30

Mississions Banquet of Indian Springs Church, Laurel



RAs of Indian Springs Church, Laurel

Steve Walker, a music evangelist from Angola, will be in concert at Park Haven Church, Laurel, on Jan. 26 at 6 p.m. All are welcome.

Pleasant Home Church, Laurel, will hold an adult dinner, Alley Cat Inn, as part of their Centennial Celebration on Jan. 18 at 6:30



GAs of Salem Church, Raymond

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BAPTIST COLLEGE & SEMINARY NEWS

STATE CHANGES

Disney World drops church services at park

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Walt Disney World in Florida has eliminated its 28-year tradition of offering on-site religious services to Christian guests, citing reasons such as a lack of space and a desire to be fair to all religions.

While Disney World's decision will likely make it more difficult for visitors to attend church services, the Southern Baptist Convention's official website, www.SBC.net, offers a tool to aid in finding Southern Baptist churches in the Orlando, Fla., area — and anywhere else in the country.

Via ChurchSearch's flexible format, a person can locate Southern Baptist churches within a radius of five, 10, or 20 miles from a certain address. Churches also can be located by partial name, city, and state. After identifying a specific church, ChurchSearch offers a map and door-to-door driving directions.

ChurchSearch is available for other uses as well. "Pastors can use ChurchSearch as a ministry resource to find a local church to minister to church members who experience a tragedy while away from home, or to contact another church body to obtain a letter of membership," the SBC website notes.

ChurchSearch also offers any SBC church a free and easy-to-use opportunity to publicize their service times, ministries and more to Web surfers looking for a new church home.

Mark Long, a Long Beach native, was been named as assistant professor of New Testament and Greek at The Baptist College of Florida, Graceville, Fla., in the fall of 2002. Long has taught at William Carey College, Hattiesburg, and served as pastor of First Church, Glendale.



Long

The following students from Kentucky graduated from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary or Southeastern College, Wake Forest, on Dec. 13: Laura Rhoden, Master of Divinity; and Scott Kellum, Doctor of Philosophy.

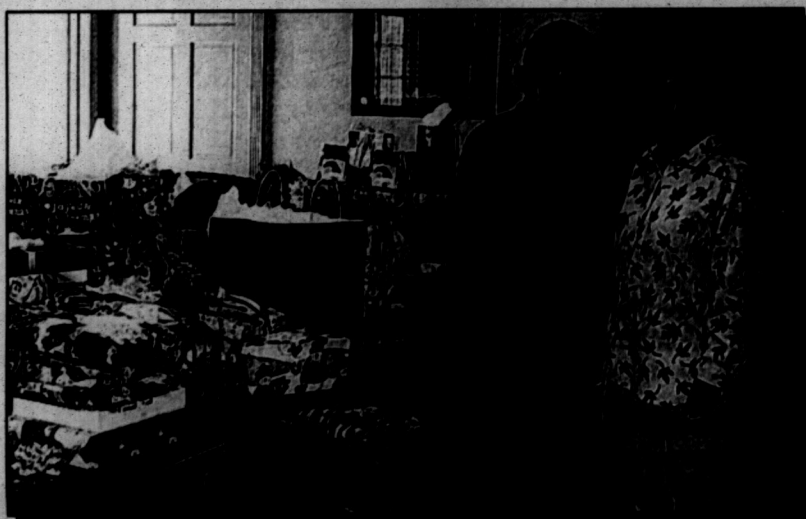
The student chapter of the Mississippi Trial Lawyers Association raised over \$1700 for Camp Rainbow, a camp for children with cancer. With the Black Association of Law Students, the school provided Thanksgiving dinners for four Jackson families. The Christian Legal Society led the effort to provide Christmas gifts for 50 children at the Baptist Children's Village. Pictured are April Taylor, Christian Legal Society, and the Village's Chrystelle Thames.

The Mississippi College Office of Continuing Education is offering senior adults, age 55 or above, the opportunity to take selected classes through the Senior Adult Education Program. For more information or to view the class schedule, visit www.mc.edu or call (601) 925-3264.



Royce, Gregory, Lee, and Doremus

All Mississippi College MBA program in the MC School of Business. The invocation was brought by Rick Gregory, Vice President for University Advancement at Dallas Baptist University in Dallas, Texas. The benediction was brought by James Doremus, Madison, Congregational Care and Prayer Pastor at First Church, Jackson. Pictured (from left) are Royce, Gregory, Lee, and Doremus.



April Taylor and Chrystelle Thames

town Lunch and Learn on Jan. 27 at First Church, Jackson. Eric Pratt, Vice President for Christian Development, will be the guest speaker. A hot plate lunch or soup and salad will be served. Call (601) 925-3208 or email alumni@mc.edu to make your reservation.

Mississippi College held the December 2002 graduation commencement ceremonies Dec. 20 in A.E. Wood Coliseum, Mississippi College. Degrees were conferred by Lee G. Royce, President of Mississippi College. The Commencement Address was delivered by Gerald Lee, professor of economics and director of the

Bala Chitto Church, Magnolia, has called **Jack Greg Whitehead** as Children's Pastor effective as of Jan. 1.



Whitehead

Bellevue Church, Hattiesburg, called **D. Wesley Smith** as their pastor on Dec. 15. Smith and his wife, Sylvia, come to Bellevue from Midway Church, Vardaman, where he served as Senior Pastor. He has also pastored in Louisiana and Alabama.

Steele Church, Forest, has called **Tony Massey** of Forest as Music and Youth Director. Massey has previously served at Parkway, Morton, and Pine Grove, Union. Blain McLain is pastor.



Massey

OBITUARIES

Lucius B. Marion Jr., retired pastor of Clarksdale Church, Clarksdale, died Jan. 3 at Northwest Mississippi Regional Medical Center. Services were held Jan. 5 at Clarksdale Church with burial in Oakridge Cemetery. Nowell Funeral Home, Clarksdale, was in charge of arrangements. Marion is survived by his wife, Mildred Caswell Marion; three children: Barbara A. Marion, Jackson; Carol Marion Fullilove, Duncan; and Charles F. Marion, Madison; six grandchildren; and three great grandchildren.



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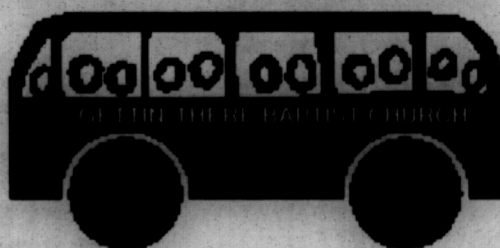
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REVIVALS — HOMECOMINGS

Homecoming at Willaim Carey College, Hattiesburg, will be held Jan. 23-25.

Events on Thursday include a Chili Cook-off at 5:30 p.m. Participants can win prizes by bringing a large batch of home-made chili to the dining hall at 5 p.m. A Symphonic Winds Concert is scheduled at 7 p.m. followed by a pep rally at 8 p.m.

Registration for the Crusader Challenge Golf Tournament begins at 11:30 a.m. on Friday at Shadow Ridge Golf Course. The format is two-man scramble and the fee is \$50. Tee off is at

noon. Reservations are required and can be made by calling (601) 318-6107.

Other events on Friday include a Women's Luncheon at 11:45 a.m.; a Mississippi Fried Catfish Supper at 5 p.m.; a School of Music Reunion at 5:30 p.m.; and the Miss Carey Pageant at 7 p.m. This year's pageant features Jennifer Adcock, Miss Mississippi 2003, Bill Hickman, local radio celebrity, and Wanda Geddie Brickner, Carey's own Miss Mississippi 1983.

Saturday's events feature a 5K Walk/Run at 8 a.m. and an alumni book signing at 10 a.m. featur-

ing several published authors of children's and inspirational books. The Annual Awards Luncheon will be held at 11:30 a.m. followed by the School of Music Concert at 2 p.m. Reunions for the classes of '63, '73, '78, and '83 will be held at 4:30 p.m. followed by the Lady Crusaders versus Spring Hill basketball game at 5 p.m. The Crusader men will take on Spring Hill at 7 p.m. with the crowning of the Homecoming Queen at halftime.

For more information call (601) 318-6107 or (800) 962-5991 ext. 107.

Bala Chitto, Magnolia: Feb. 21-23; Fri.-Sat., 7 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m., dinner on the grounds; Don Taylor, Conehatta, revivalist; Dave Hartson, pastor; for more information, call (601) 783-6670.

First Church, Terry: March 1-2; 150th anniversary; Sat., Testimony and Praise Service, 7 p.m.; Sunday, Sunday School, 9:15 a.m., worship, 10:30 a.m., dinner on the grounds; John Pace, pastor; for more information, contact (601) 878-5735 or jpace@fbc-terry.org

Analysis: Conference a 'star-studded' event

By S.A. "Sonny" Adkins
MBCB Evangelism Director

A highlight in my pastoral ministry was to attend the annual State Evangelism Conference. It was the sweet fragrance of a rose in the midst of the gray of winter. I enjoyed fellowship with friends throughout the state, it served as a two-day reprieve from the vigor of the pastorate, and my heart was challenged with outstanding preaching and singing. What a blessing to begin the year!

As your Evangelism Director, I have the responsibility for planning this conference for January 27-28 at the Harrisburg Church in Tupelo. Our theme is "A Moment of Destiny." The conference begins at 1:30 p.m. on January 27 and concludes on January 28 at around 3:30 p.m. It will include four sessions of praise, worship, and preaching.

Our praise leaders will be our own Reggie and Ladye Smith. Reggie is from Moselle and Ladye is from Iuka. They live in Nashville and you have seen and heard them on the Gaither Program.

Worship leaders for January 27 will include Ric Greene of First Church, Madison, and Aaron Tones of our host church. The Harrisburg choir will be singing in the 6:30 p.m. evening session on January 27.

The January 27 evening session will see the largest number of lay people attending.



Adkins

I am asking the churches in the Tupelo area to encourage their lay people to attend and to invite the unsaved to come with them. We will conduct evangelism Monday evening, as well as preach about it.

Our January 27 evening preachers will be pointing to decision. An invitation will be extended. The preachers are tops.

Danny Lanier is one of the most frequently used vocational evangelists in our state. He will be followed by Ronnie Floyd and Richard Jackson.

Richard Jackson has preached at our Mississippi Baptist Convention and the Evangelism Conference in past years.

Ronnie Floyd pastors the largest church in Arkansas. He is an anointed preacher. You may have seen him via his television ministry program, Invitation to Life.

On January 28, Terrific Tuesday's worship is led by our state vocational evangelists. Join Steve and Becky Carver, Ray Walker, and Steve Walker as we worship our Lord during the 9 a.m. morning session.

Our preachers will be evangelist Don Taylor, Jay Strack, and Jack Graham, who is the current president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Many of you have heard Graham preach by way of television on his Power Point telecast.

What an honor to have the president of the SBC preaching in both Tuesday sessions.

Jay Strack is a gifted preacher who has made nine trips to the Holy Land, preached throughout the world, and has served as SBC first vice-president.

Three major emphases will be promoted throughout the conference Special emphasis will be given to reaching children for Christ during this year. You will also learn about our Hispanic Evangelism Conference planned for May, 2003. Also, information will be shared regarding the Evangelism Response Center.

The 2003 State Evangelism Conference is a first for a Women's Track running on Monday and Tuesday. Among others, Jaye Martin of the North American mission Board in Atlanta will be the featured speaker. Our Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union has planned an outstanding program. I encourage the ladies to attend.

Our worship for the 1:30 p.m. session on January 28 will be led by Slater Murphy of Fairview church in Columbus.

I say without reservation this is a star-studded program. It is my prayer Mississippi Baptists will attend our State Evangelism Conference. You have a date with destiny.

Pickering renominated by Bush

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — President Bush on January 7 sent the U.S. Senate all 30 federal judicial nominees who were rejected or blocked in the last session, including Charles Pickering of

Laurel whose nomination was bitterly contested in part because of his deep religious convictions.

The president's renomination of his choices came on the first day of Congress'

new session and elicited promises of opposition from Democratic senators, especially to Pickering, a staunch pro-life advocate and former two-term president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. He was also a member of the Southern Baptist Convention's Peace Committee in 1985.

Pickering has served as a federal district judge in Mississippi for the past 12 years.

The Democrats, who controlled the Senate and the Judiciary Committee the last 19 months, will have to overcome a Republican majority to turn back Bush's nominees this time.

The president chose Pickering in 2001 to fill a vacancy on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. The Judiciary Committee defeated his nomination last year on a 10-9, party-line vote with the Democrats in the majority.

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2. I want forgiveness for
my sins and freedom
from eternal death.
(I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose
from the grave to forgive my
sins and to restore my rela-
tionship with you.
(I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ
into my life. From this time
on, I want to live in a loving
relationship with him.
(I receive Christ as my Savior
and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to
them he gave the right to become
children of God, even to those
who believe in his name
(John 1:12).

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FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

The Promise of Life's Value

Psalm 139: 7-16; Mark 10: 13-16

By Shirley Stough

"Human life is cheap" seems to be society's viewpoint. The news media bombards us daily with crime reports and the entertainment media glorifies violence and death. We have become so desensitized to violence and death that abortion, selling of fetal body parts, and assisted suicide have become acceptable practices. Yet, almost all adults are interested in life and living - at least for themselves. People work their lives out to gratify themselves, often ignoring spiritual health, exploiting others, and failing to see that life is in God's hands. When we place the "quality of our lives" above God's way for our lives, we interfere with His plan and purpose. Christians have committed themselves to obey God's plan and purpose for life. A part of this commitment to

life is the commitment to do what we can to save and to protect human life. After thirty years of Roe vs. Wade, over forty million induced abortions have occurred. With over 100,000 induced abortions occurring each day, Christians need to hear and to adopt biblical teachings about their responsibility not only to treasure but also to protect human life.

Some people believe there is no God or if there is one, He does not care for them. Their separation from and/or denial of God results from their own pain and from the violence and suffering they see in our world. Many verses in the Bible refute their view. One of these passages, Psalm 139, is a song in which David praises God for God's presence and function in His life. David's words reveal that God is

all-seeing, all-present, all-creative and all-holy. God has been in a person's life from conception to death and beyond - caring, loving, guiding, forgiving. While we are in the womb, God is forming us as spiritual and physical beings. While forming us, He charts a plan for our lives. He is so

involved in us that there is no way a person can move from His presence. Even when we run from Him, God is wherever we go, seeking to love us.

David gives us a view of the creator's plan. Conception and birth are not merely biological processes. God is the creator of life within the womb. He makes us in His image; thus, human life is sacred. The way the human body develops and functions is a miracle. We can only be creations of a divine creator. Since God has made us so wonderfully, our lives are to be highly valued. To interrupt God's creation process through abortion is to destroy the work of Almighty God. To interrupt God's work and plan is

wrong, yet it is done everyday at a rate of over 100,000 induced abortions per day. Today, most people recognize that life begins at conception; however, proponents of abortion say a living fetus has not yet become a person. True believers recognize that a fetus is a living person created in God's image. Through technology we can see the miraculous development of human characteristics and hear the heart beat by day 21. These sights and sounds further convince us of God's involvement in our creation and of our need to value and protect sacred human life.

Jesus revealed the value He placed on human life by loving little children. In early times children were not held in high regard. In fact, infanticide was an accepted practice. Jesus wanted adults to value children as He did. He rebuked the disciples who attempted to keep parents from bringing their children to Him. Jesus wants to receive all who will come to Him. He is greatly displeased with anyone who prevents someone from coming to Him. The parents

were right to bring their children to Him as we are right when we bring someone to Him. Jesus said that children had the right characteristics of those who sincerely come to Him. They are spiritually needy persons who can do nothing to save themselves. They need His saving grace. The children were open, honest, loving, and teachable. These characteristics are traits that we need in our relationship with God.

As true believers we are to be faithful stewards of every aspect of human life. We are to value life as God's gift. When we truly value life, we will do all we can to protect those who are weak and to build up those who are depressed or discouraged. We can treat all with dignity and respect if we allow ourselves to see others from Jesus' viewpoint. His viewpoint will show us the value of our lives as well as the value of others' lives. We can change the viewpoint of society from "human life is cheap" to "human life is a precious miracle."

Stough is a member of First Church, Picayune.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

The Sanctity of Human Life

Gen. 1:27; Psalm 139: 13-16; Mark 10: 10-16

By Don Wilson

As Southern Baptists, we have honored the sanctity of human life because of two great evils that exist in American society - abortion and euthanasia. Neither of them is rare any longer in our country. Abortion is the snuffing out the life of unborn babies while still in the mother's womb. Many techniques are used, some of which are inhumane. Euthanasia is the killing of those who someone has decided have no remaining quality of life (old or severely handicapped). The problem with both abortion and euthanasia is that someone has to "play God." And human beings are unqualified when it comes to that type of decision.

I. CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE (Genesis 1:27)

Three times in Genesis 1:27 the phrase "God created" appears. "So God created man in His image; in the image of God created He him; male and female he created them." The primary rea-

son life is so precious is that it is God's handiwork. When a baby is born, it is the supernatural work of God. God initially shaped the human body in Adam, then God allowed man to reproduce Himself. God is at work every time a baby is conceived and every time it is birthed. However, man was not created as every other animal on the earth was. He alone was created in the image of God. When God created in His image, the result was a creature that shared the likeness of God. Some scholars believe this idea refers to the three-fold nature of man as an emotional, rational, and spiritual being, but bearing the image of God certainly refers to something deeper. That image is the very essence of God. Man does not share in His sinlessness, His power, or His Deity. We have, however, been created as relational creatures. We long for relationship with our Creator. Because of the way we were cre-

ated, it is important that we honor both Life and the One who gave it.

II. CREATED FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY (Psalm 139:13-16)

Another reason why we should honor life's sanctity even prior to birth is because God's creative work occurred beginning at conception. Psalm 139 acknowledges that truth. Actually the psalm states David's knowledge of God's knowledge of him. He recognized that no place existed where he could be out of the range of God's all-seeing eye. Psalm 139:13-16 presents the truth that no time exists when God is unable to know any human being. God was at work to "knit me together in my mother's womb." The verb translate "knit" actually refers to a covering or a protection. Here in Psalm 139:13 the idea of weaving has often been associated with God's activity at conception and during the initial, formative weeks of pregnancy. Those first "stitches" and "knots" that were carefully arranged and formed were the work of God, not chance. God's activity at conception is central to His concern for life.

The reaction of the psalmist was to praise God because "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). Even though he probably had little knowledge of how that tiny fetus in the womb was formed, he was in awe of God's handiwork. Today genetics has advanced to the point where some researchers have begun to manipulate DNA in attempts to change embryos and to attempt cloning. However, life is precious because it is God's work, even from inception. Psalm 139:15-16 delves deeper into the issue by asserting that God also was completely aware of what each human life would be while it was still an unformed mass in the mother's womb. "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (verse 16). Before I lived one day, God already knew His purposes for every day I would live. The same is true for every life.

III. CREATED TO COME TO HIM (Mark 10:13-16)

The first passages that we have examined speak of God's creative work and show the value that God assigns to every

human being. This passage focuses on the importance Jesus placed on the life of children. Parents were bringing their children to Jesus to "have Him touch them" (verse 13). Some of them may have been healed by His touch. These people wanted Jesus' blessing on their children. The disciples of Jesus, however, rebuked the parents and tried to run them away. Jesus was indignant and responded: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (verse 14). Jesus not only wanted the children to come to Him, He recognized them as important because their nature illustrates what is needed to be part of the kingdom of God. A childlike faith in Jesus must willingly receive the gift of life offered by God.

Finally, Jesus took the children into His arms and blessed them. They were not a nuisance, but valuable. The example of Jesus shows us the value of life. Unborn life is precious life. The life of children is precious life. Any life is indeed precious life.

Wilson is pastor of Pleasant Ridge Church, Dumas.

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THE VILLAGE VIEW



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Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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Presidents see bright future for seminaries

Part one of a two-part series

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP) — A renewal of "missionary zeal" among seminary students, unprecedented strength in professors' credentials, and an unparalleled growth in the number of women's programs and women students were noted by the presidents of the six Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) seminaries in an exclusive interview with Florida Baptist Witness.

There are currently about 14,000 students enrolled in SBC seminaries. If the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is to grow and remain a vital denomination, however, the presidents said they will need greater financial support for their professors and students, and a greater partnership with the churches of the convention for those who are "called" to pursue theological education in preparation for ministry.

Each of the presidents, in Jacksonville for the Council of Seminary Presidents (CSP) annual work meeting in November, spoke about the state of the SBC seminaries both collectively and individually in a wide-ranging, hour-long interview.

The presidents are: William O. Crews, Golden Gate Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif.; Phil Roberts, Midwestern Seminary, Kansas City, Mo.; Chuck Kelley, New Orleans Seminary; Paige Patterson, Southeastern Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.; R. Albert Mohler Jr., Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky.; and Kenneth S. Hemphill, Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

CONFESSIONAL SEMINARIES

Nearly three decades ago, the seminaries were the primary focus of growing concern among many Southern Baptists who believed the convention was becoming liberal and the seminaries were not teaching what most grassroots Baptists believed, especially about the inspiration and nature of Scripture.

The "Conservative Resurgence" within the SBC sought to bring a more conservative direction to the convention by electing SBC presi-

dents whose appointments would result in change in the SBC entities, including the seminaries. Each of the current seminary presidents came to office during the course of the conservative resurgence.

Mohler, Southern's president and the current council chairman, reflected on the implications of what he called a "confessional recovery" in the SBC.

"The biggest change to the culture and to the seminaries has been a recovery of confessionalism," Mohler said, "because if you go back to where we were before the controversy in the SBC, it was not that the seminaries were out of line merely on the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, they were basically rejecting any model of confessional accountability that meant that a professor was expected to teach certain doctrines and to teach them without hesitation or mental reservation."

Midwestern's Roberts, the most junior CSP member, lauded the others, calling them "among the giants of Southern Baptists in their commitment and in their convictions."

The seminaries are in "very good hands," he said. "Apart from us entering a 'dark age,' as it's been referred to by some of our detractors in other circles, ...we are entering a golden age of theological education."

Kelley agreed, saying, "It's a glorious day on our seminary campuses." In reference to a comment he said was made recently by a former seminary president about the "state of ruin" in Southern Baptist theological education, the New Orleans president quipped that his reaction "was to just pray to God to ruin us some more if this is what it's like to be in ruins."

Patterson said in the past 10 years he has seen the seminaries move from being "educational appendages [of] the denomination to being partners with the churches and the world mission enterprise."

THE STATE OF THE FACULTY

Changes at the seminaries have not led to a difficulty in recruiting faculty, the presidents said. To the contrary, Hemphill said at Southwestern "the faculty is probably stronger today than it's ever been."

Citing a "diversity of degrees," he said there has been an intentional move to "find a more diversified faculty in terms of their credentials, not in terms of their theological integrity."

"The Baptist Faith and Message is a given for us," Hemphill said. "What I found most interesting is when you put that parameter up, when you put that fence up, it actually provides a real sense of security, of protection."

"It's not as if it is an onerous sort of thing. There's almost a greater freedom to... teach in the context of that."

Roberts agreed. "There is a bumper crop of excellent young scholars out there," he said. "As far as

Midwestern is concerned, if you look at the credentials of our faculty, over and against 20 years ago, by an objective standard, you would have to say that this faculty is far better credentialed in many ways, if not most ways."

Calling the seminaries' faculty members "the envy of the evangelical world," Mohler said the schools' respective catalogs bear witness to the faculties' strength.

"I think the seriousness with which the SBC set its course is attracting scholars who would not want to teach in an institution that lacks the kind of accountability the SBC demands. What other system of seminaries share the kind of commitments we share?" he asked.

Kelley said the professors are "doing wonderful work, not only in the classroom, but in their scholarly areas, in spite of salaries that fall under the national averages."

"It's really clear to me the contribution the SBC is making to conservative evangelical

scholarship on all fronts," Roberts said, citing Southern Baptist scholars' efforts in clarifying the role of women in the church and opposing the "openness of God" theology that some evangelicals have started to embrace.

Southern Baptist scholarly contributions create "a sort of a think tank of the denomination," said

Patterson, who believes the production of "significant theological literature" is a measure of whether the seminaries are succeeding in their mission.

"That, in fact, is happening," Patterson said.

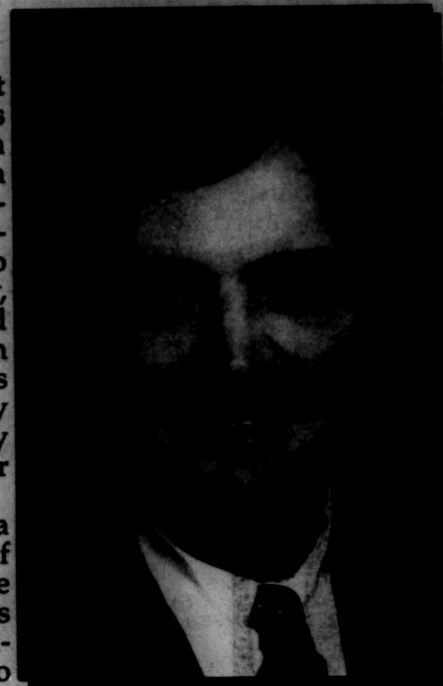
THE STATE OF THE STUDENTS

"There's good news there, very good news," Mohler said, in tracking whether graduates actually go into the ministry or to the mission fields. Another question to ask is, "Are they faithful and effective in their ministries?" he said.

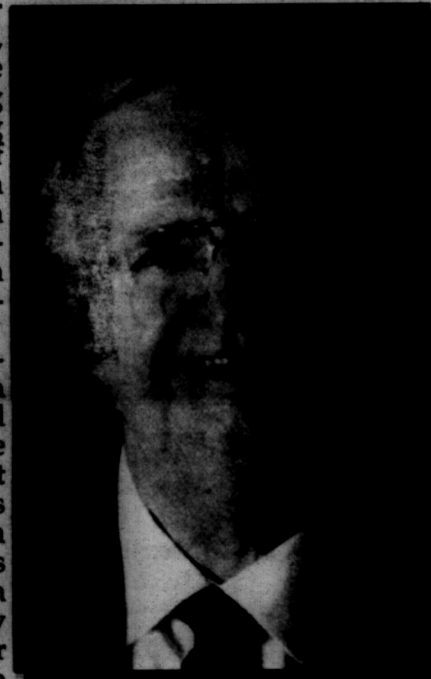
"I would argue that the only way to know that is to know their churches," Mohler said. "Are they not only committed to exposition, but is biblical knowledge being



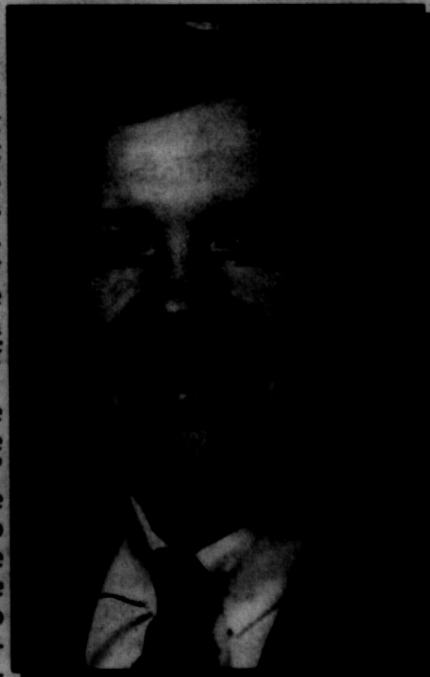
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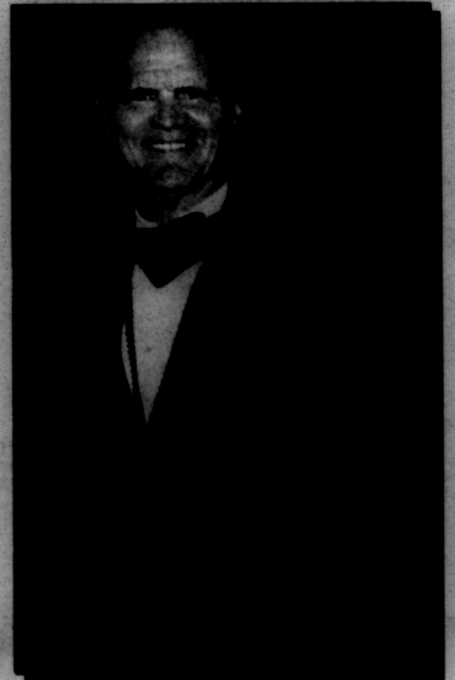
Mohler



Crews



Roberts



Hemphill

rooted and grounded in the congregation? These are questions that will take time, but I can't imagine a more important question faced by our denomination than the question of whether these things are going to happen in our local churches."

Golden Gate's Crews said the question to ask is, "Are customers buying the product you are producing?"

The answer is yes, he said.

Bibliocipher

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BSDE ZBAM, U QS ZBDZ

MODIIUO XL ZBS TSSPQ,

SRST ZU JDHS ZBS LUUE

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Clue: Z=T

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Joel Two: Six